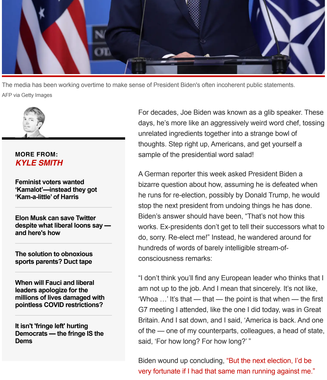
KYLE SMITH

OPINION

Media works overtime to clean up Joe Biden's word salads

By Kyle Smith

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The media has been working overtime to make sense of President Biden's often incoherent public statements.
AFP via Getty Images



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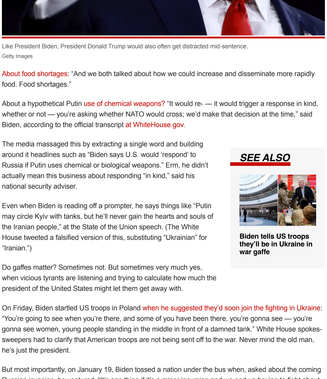
For decades, Joe Biden was known as a glib speaker. These days, he's more like an aggressively weird word chef, tossing unrelated ingredients together into a strange bowl of thoughts. Step right up, Americans, and get yourself a sample of the presidential word salad!

A German reporter this week asked President Biden a bizarre question about how, assuming he is defeated when he runs for re-election, possibly by Donald Trump, he would stop the next president from undoing things he has done. Biden's answer should have been, "That's not how this works. Ex-presidents don't get to tell their successors what to do, sorry. Re-elect me!" Instead, he wandered around for hundreds of words of barely intelligible stream-of-consciousness remarks:

"I don't think you'll find any European leader who thinks that I am not up to the job. And I mean that sincerely. It's not like, 'Whoa … It's that — that — the point is that when — the first G7 meeting I attended, like the one I did today, was in Great Britain. And I sat down, and I said, 'America is back. And one of the — one of my counterparts, colleagues, a head of state, said, 'For how long? For how long?' "

Biden wound up concluding, "But the next election, I'd be very fortunate if I had that same man running against me."

The media spun this loopy, defensive digression as "Biden torches Trump on world stage, talks trash about 2024," or "Joe Biden shades Donald Trump's 2024 hopes without even mentioning his name." (Back in the real world, the average of the last three polls show Trump beating Biden by an average of three points.)

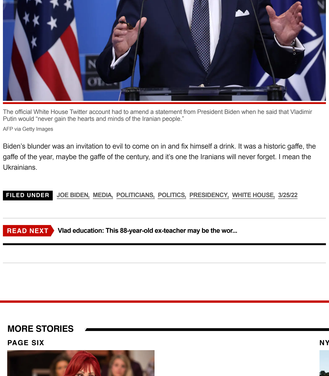


President Biden offered a scattered answer when asked what he would do if Russian President Vladimir Putin used chemical weapons in Ukraine.
AP

Suddenly the reporters are masters of paraphrase: Media Joe Biden is tough, clear and macho.

Actual Joe Biden is whispery, weird and befuddled.

True, both President George W. Bush and President Trump were prone to getting distracted mid-sentence. Their transcripts don't read so well either. The difference is that the media are determined to cover for Biden's gaffe-a-minute weirdness. Scramble the jets to unscramble the sayings of Grandpa Joe!



Like President Biden, President Donald Trump would also often get distracted mid-sentence.
Getty Images

About food shortages: "And we both talked about how we could increase and disseminate more rapidly food. Food shortages."

About a hypothetical Putin use of chemical weapons? "It would re- — it would trigger a response in kind, whether or not — you're asking whether NATO would cross; we'd make that decision at the time," said Biden, according to the official transcript at WhiteHouse.gov.

The media massaged this by extracting a single word and building around it headlines such as "Biden says U.S. would 'respond' to Russia if Putin uses chemical or biological weapons." Erm, he didn't actually mean this business about responding "in kind," said his national security adviser.

Even when Biden is reading off a prompter, he says things like "Putin may circle Kyiv with tanks, but he'll never gain the hearts and souls of the Iranian people," at the State of the Union speech. (The White House tweeted a falsified version of this, substituting "Ukrainian" for "Iranian.")

Do gaffes matter? Sometimes not. But sometimes very much yes, when vicious tyrants are listening and trying to calculate how much the president of the United States might let them get away with.

SEE ALSO



Biden tells US troops they'll be in Ukraine in war gaffe

On Friday, Biden startled US troops in Poland when he suggested they'd soon join the fighting in Ukraine: "You're going to see when you're there, and some of you have been there, you're gonna see — you're gonna see women, young people standing in the middle in front of a damned tank," White House spokes-sweepers had to clarify that American troops are not being sent off to the war. Never mind the old man, he's just the president.

But most importantly, on January 19, Biden tossed a nation under the bus when, asked about the coming Russian invasion, he ventured, "It's one thing if it's a minor incursion and we end up having to fight about what to do and not do."

"We want to remind the great powers that there are no minor incursions," Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky reminded us in a tweet.

The official White House Twitter account had to amend a statement from President Biden when he said that Vladimir Putin would "never gain the hearts and minds of the Iranian people."
AFP via Getty Images

Biden's blunder was an invitation to evil to come on in and fix himself a drink. It was a historic gaffe, the gaffe of the year, maybe the gaffe of the century, and it's one the Iranians will never forget. I mean the Ukrainians.

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